Beauty the Pilgrim

☆

GERALD GOULD

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Beauty the Pilgrim

BEAUTY THE PILGRIM

New Poems

by Gerald Gould

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I

THE ATONEMENT

ONE died upon a lonely Cross
—Lonely enough with two beside.
Dear, that was your loss and my loss,
And it was there we died.
O past the scope of hand's compelling,
Past the cunning of the eyes,
Past the noose that thought, rebelling,
Flings to snare the skies,
His love reached out to every part,
And taught his fellows to atone,
And broke my heart and broke your heart,
And would not let him die alone.

II

THE COMPANION

HE found my house upon the hill.
 I made the bed and swept the floor,
And laboured solitary, till
 He entered at the open door.

He sat with me to break my fast:
 He blessed the bread and poured the wine,
And spoke such friendly words, at last
 I knew not were they his or mine;

But only, when he rose and went
 And left the twilight in the door,
I found my hands were more content
 To make a bed and sweep a floor.

III

BEAUTY THE PILGRIM

BEAUTY the Pilgrim
 Carries no purse;
He pays his needs
 With a snatch of verse;
He mends his coat,
 And cobbles his shoes,
With a song, with a dream, with a thread
 Of the world's good news.

Beauty the Pilgrim
 Came to my door;
But I was busy
 Counting my store;
And when I looked up
 Where day had shone,
My store was withered away
 And Beauty gone.

IV

THE WHEEL

HERE at the edge of ecstasy, the fringe
Of what we two are capable to feel,
Time stands, and turns : the wheel
Recalls its axle, and the door its hinge.

Could they have but forgotten, O indeed
We should have mastered love's abiding stuff,
In silence big with happiness enough
To set a new world singing, were there need.

V

COMPENSATION

HERE, in the field, last year,
 I saw a seagull die,
Flying inland, for fear
 Of change in the sky.

Seagulls six and seven
 Flew inland and cried :
And one fell out of Heaven
 Here, and died.

I found no scar or stain :
 He was white and grey, like smoke.
He flew, and was in pain,
 And his heart broke.

Now, when I come this way,
 I remember his beauty and pride,
And how from the hollow of day
 He fell, and died.

Then, I too was proud;
 I was angry to see death.
The hour, that was warm and loud,
 Drew one cold breath.

Again the gulls are flying.
 My heart, that then was a lover
Hot and high, is dying
 —But the gulls fly over.

VI

MORTALITY

IN the green quiet wood, where I was used,
In summer, to a welcome calm and dark,
I found the threat of murder introduced
By scars of white paint on the wrinkled bark.

How few old friends were to be spared! And now
I see my friends with new eyes here in town
—Men as trees walking, and on every brow
A pallid scar, and all to be cut down.

VII

EPITAPH

LIFE did her wrong, and death will do her wrong.
Rest was for her too fond, and change too rough.
Not love could make her mortal, and not song
Could give her immortality enough.

She had such beauty as, when all else goes rotten,
Lurks in the flower beneath the darkness furled.
Here lies, lone buried in a place forgotten,
The girl that was the wonder of the world.

VIII

ANOTHER EPITAPH

HE did not catch conditions from his kind,
Nor try his tread to find if earth would bear:
The noonday dazzle that makes others blind
Led his straight vision up the dancing stair.

How should this labourer sink to discontent
With work to do, when perfect work was done?
Or how mistake his time and place, who went
South with the birds and westward with the sun?

IX

THE DOWNS

I WALK upon the hill,
Between the moon and sun
—One high, a lamp; and one
Low, and declining still.

Low, and declining. Farewell
To the day so rich, so dear!
The evening grief is here,
The evening bell.

But high over the lines
Of the downs hoary and grey,
The moon is up and away,
The flying silver shines.

Across the clouds that fly
The silver moon flies far.
The sun sinks, and a star,
One star, enchants the sky.

X

A PORTRAIT

SHE does not speak : she has no word
 For life's confusion and dismay.
Her heart is like a songless bird
 Whose plumage holds the core of day.

Elucidatory by grace
 Of light shed on the human task,
Her beautiful and silent face
 Answers the things she does not ask.

The Mountain Eagle

I

THE mountain eagle lifts his head
Where morning down the gorge comes red,
Seeking with strong incessant stare
The eyrie of the king of air.
Each golden wing awakes, a sleepy thing,
And showers of dawn are shed from either wing :
Then, as the blue, awaking, breaking higher,
Sweeps up the grey, the opal and the dun,
Huge and slantwise, like a leaning fire,
The eagle takes the sun.
So man's first faith, clean-washed in coloured air,
Tempts the great spiral of ascending flight,
Leaves the blue mountains in the blue dawn bare,
And dims and dwindles and is lost in light.
The eagle sees the world expand
To the five fingers of day's groping hand.
The blue burns full, tires and is touched with grey,
And night's five fingers gather up the day.

The eagle turns, remembering his nest,
Fearing the cold, unfriendly and fantastic stars;
Drops, a black speck, across the sunset bars,
And in the dark, in the silence, in the place his dreams possessed,
Havens his violent heart to rest.

II

THAT was far away and long ago,
But the vision stays unspent,
As, in a calm that answers and fulfils,
The ridged waves of the climbing continent
Break at the end in many lifted hills
And foam into a hanging fringe of snow.

III

I HAVE lit another morning from my brain,
And made a day :
Now, while the sun stands and the shadows
stay,
I will have love again :
Kiss the first kiss, and know its worth;
Gild with April the brave earth :
Blind my eyes with shaken hair,
Yet, with blind eyes, hold fast, for ever fair,
Your face of dawn, that now I only know
A tragic pallor, fit to come and go.
I will be sure.—But sureness goes from me.
Perhaps I have been dreaming, as a boy
Reads the old tale before sleep sets him free
From the constriction of the day's employ,
And then, hushed in the quiet arms of joy,
Dreams that he hails, across a narrowing sea,
The walls and towers of Troy.

IV

PLUNGE deep your soul in sense,
That sense may flower in soul:
So only shall the dream be fixed, the scroll
Of difficult living yield its evidence
To the single-purposed eye:
Press on, age-down where drifted forests lie
That once were tall beneath the open sky,
And reefs of innocent uncontested gold,
And conflagrations that were old
Ere earth was loosened from the sun:
Then up, into the ever-thinlier spun
Fine aching web of distance, till at last
Orion's glittering guard is passed,
And all the Pleiades swing near,
Their veilëd sister shining clear;
And on, and on, till sight finds rest
In eternity confessed:
As the male essence, spending to be spent,
Is drawn deep, deep in the receiving fire,
Sweet past all sweetness, sharp as pangs of ire;
And infinite desire
Is one at last with infinite content.

V

LO, beauty undenied!
I stand upon the ledge
Of a steep wood that clings down the hill-side
To lose itself in sunlight, in a pool
Of air like wavering water bright and cool—
A silver bowl a-brim
With silver shadow where quick sparkles swim,
As fireflies lace with light the summer hedge—
A haze of mingled noon and evening hours,
A precipice of quiet—trees like flowers,
Exquisite, slender, dim:
Dark firs, and whitebeam, and the shining beech,
Each alien, solitary-stemmed, and each
Knit with its fellows in a patterned sheen
Of branch and leaf, an ecstasy of green,
But green turned silver in this dusk of noon.
Let thought plunge downward, as the diver goes
Far through the sun-transmuted sea,
To find who knows what treasure?—as who knows

This woodland venture, or can tell the tune
Of the bewildered silence—tree invoking tree,
And thought escaping thought, and passion here subdued
To the mood
Of the enchanted wood?
Down, down, deep down, thought goes, and stays
Lost in the hollow, lost in the watery air,
Lost in the dryads' bright and tangled hair,
Lost in confusion of fine silver haze.

VI

I CAN be happy once, twice, or three times,
Watching in solitude a lonely beauty, but in the end
—What moment waits not, hungry, for that which fills and rhymes ?
And, for the sharing of beauty, I need my lover, my friend.

VII

IT is too late to be possessed :
The dear surrender ties and blinds :
Peace runs upon the running winds
—In liberty's the only rest.
Then open, open, all ye gates
That man has shut for his content,
And show a world incontinent
Of many skies and fates !
Let each bright moment be a spear at poise !
—But the night-sky's a tangle of lost spears.
They are the hopes of girls and boys :
Their bright hopes, and their tears.
—We know a freedom that was never free,
A hope whereto the newer hopes do wrong :
We stand here where the seaward streams are
strong,
And hear far off the unliberated sea.
—And yet, one time, I found a way
To break the blinding wall of day,
And reconcile the jar of dark and light
With freedom's easy infinite.

I stood with one so near, so dear,
Her beauty brought the lifting year;
And she was still, in such content
As spans the unhurried firmament;
And in her stillness her desire
Laughed and answered like a fire;
And all her attitude expressed—
Is it too late to be possessed?
And when my lips and hands said *No*,
I did but tell her what she knew,
For she had come on freedom so,
And looked upon the sudden goal of sight:
And the clear colour of her own delight
Moved in her cheeks: and I was happy too.

VIII

I AM free.
I have given my grief away.
I am shed in the springs of the day,
And dispersed in the foam of the sea.
I have found out my kin :
We have shared the bread and the wine :
I have taken my brother's sin,
And my brother has taken mine.
And O ye thin bright branches, mapped with dew,
That the broad sun torments with watery fires,
Now yellow Autumn broods upon the shires,
How my lost heart can now return to you !
How I can taste the sharp clean upland smell,
Peat-touched, half-smoky, memory-rich of crops
That took their turn before the gathered hops
And in late Summer to the threshing fell !

A small shy beast, half guessed at, half observed,
From the dark sodden hedge peered out a space,
His eyes like berries in his wise old face :
Then, with a whisk and scutter, he had swerved
Into his hiding : but I wished him back.
I thought he had been friendly—not as when
All nature plotted with the world of men
To hunt my heart—and God set on the pack.

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